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IMPRESSIONS OF SOUTHERN ASIA

AN INTERVIEW WITH
BISHOP WILLIAM F. McDOWELL

BISHOP AND MRS. McDOWELL SPENT FOUR MONTHS (DECEMBER, 1910, TO MARCH, 1911) IN INDIA, MALAYSIA, AND THE PHILIPPINES. THE OCCASION WAS THE QUADRENNIAL VISIT TO SOUTHERN ASIA OF A GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT. THIS INTERVIEW WITH THE BISHOP WAS HAD IMMEDIATELY ON HIS RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES.

BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
150 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

IMPRESSIONS OF SOUTHERN ASIA

You have made the tour of all the Southern Asia Conferences. What have been your dominant impressions?

I am convinced of India's absolute need of Christianity and the utter inability of her own religions to bring her people redemption or new life. Over and over one keeps saying, There is no other name. I am impressed by the quality and the quantity of the work already done by Christianity in India. This is indicated both by Christianity's numerical strength (Protestantism now numbering at least a million people) and by Christianity's tremendous influence upon the moral, religious, intellectual, social, political, and personal standards and ideals of India. The early history of the church in the Roman Empire and in the conquest of Europe has many parallels in India to-day. It is easy to say that our converts are mostly from the outcasts, and it is easy to regret that fact, but the pervasive influence of Christianity has gone through all strata—the hard strata of Indian life—until the whole life has already been affected by it.

Another dominant impression is the solidity and apparent permanence of Christianity as one of the recognized religions of India. It is no longer ignored. It is not yet triumphant, but it is established.

Another dominant impression is that the task of conquest has only begun, is to be harder before it is finished, and cannot be successfully performed by the

agencies and energies now employed by the Christian churches at work in India. Mohammedanism in India is powerful, active, popular, and aggressive. Hinduism is having a real and widespread revival or reawakening. It is not true to-day that the altars of heathenism are crumbling, her temples neglected, and no new shrines being built. In at least two great cities the most conspicuous building enterprises visible from tall buildings are new mosques. The methods of Christianity are being copied and adopted, features of Christian civilization are being taken up, the language of Christianity is being used, with the heart of Christianity left out. Just as in China one hears of a Confucio-Christianity, so one hears in India of an Indo-Christianity. And this is not the pure eastern Christianity of the first century, the Christianity of Christ. It is a paganized, Hinduized Christianity far removed from the religion of Jesus Christ. Hinduism has immense capacity for extinction by absorption and for destruction by perversion, and this capacity is at work on Christianity in India. The Samaj movements are not in the interest of a true pure type of Christianity. In view of certain reactions and the revival of non-Christian influences, the immense awakening of mighty Mohammedanism, and its powerful appeal to the Eastern mind, one cannot resist the impression that the great work of Christianity in India is yet to be done. The church at home must not demand or expect the impossible of the young church in that vast and varied empire. A course in early church history would be good for Mission Study classes just now.

Another dominant impression is that new emphasis must be laid upon the training of Christian leaders—men and women—*on the field*. We have reached the point where a mighty native leader, educated and consecrated, is imperatively needed in every important center. We must not train fewer *workers*, but must train more *leaders*. We can go on as we are going by doing as

we are doing, but the excellent work we have done compels an immeasurably better work than we have ever done. The leadership of India will pass into the hands of educated Indians, who will lead both the educated and the uneducated classes. Uneducated Indians cannot do it. Educated Americans and Europeans cannot do it. Educated Indians will do it. Shall that educated leadership be Christian or non-Christian? That is the whole question. Mass movements among the outcasts make educated Christian leadership imperative. Mohammedans and Hindus see this clearly. They will provide—are providing—the institutions of higher learning and are filling them. The most active educational movement of the year has been the endowment of the Mohammedan College at Aligarh as a tribute to the new king-emperor and a feature of the durbar! Will the Christian Church be wise in the day of its opportunity? Ten years from to-day our native ministry in India ought to have at least a hundred men in it who are graduates of college and theological seminary. To-day in all India we have one. I never have had such a conviction as to the value and the necessity of higher Christian education as India has given me. This is the test and proof of its excellence. Every good work done requires that better work shall follow it.

Another dominant impression is that the field is undermanned, that our present force is inadequate, that our missionaries are compelled to spend too much time and strength obtaining money to carry on their own work, that this constant strain upon them in large part takes them out of, and unfits them for, their own highest and best, most direct missionary service, and that the Kingdom of God in India would be made glad if all “special givers” at home should send word to all missionaries that they need not write any more appeals for ten years, and that all “special

gifts" would be continued for ten years and increased ten per cent each year, so that the missionaries could be missionaries instead of part missionary and part agonized and burdened solicitors of funds. More than one confessed to me that he gave half his strength to the task of raising special gifts. And yet these are the men most competent to lead India's hosts and to guide the young church aright. And the need of missionary leadership was never so great and its opportunity never so promising. More than once as these men told me of their hundreds of letters and their anxieties I said in my heart, "Loose them and let them go."

Another dominant impression which made glad my heart was the impression made upon me by certain native ministers and native Christians. I looked for the types I had heard William Butler speak of years ago and found them—found them in beauty and strength of Christian life, experience, and character. No one could meet some of the men and women we saw and ever doubt again the power of the Gospel of Christ in the life of a modern Indian. In a certain village one early morning Mrs. McDowell was attracted by the faces of certain women, who looked different from the others—they had light and character in their faces. She asked who they were and was told at once: "They are Christians of the second generation." The Hinduism of the centuries has not produced anything to equal certain men whose names leap to my lips, and whose faces rise before me, sons of outcasts who have become sons of God—fit to stand before kings.

Another dominant impression was made by the manifest success of our work in India. The missionaries will easily recall criticisms I freely made when with them, criticisms of past mistakes and present errors as they seemed to me. But making all abatements necessary to be made, I record my deliberate conviction

that our mission in India has achieved under God a success far beyond all legitimate human expectations, and possibly the largest success of any of our foreign missions. The vision of what God has enabled us to do is enough to make any man shout for joy. And I did it more than once—sometimes over the work of men with whose policies I disagree. The hand of God has led our church in India.

How much of our work in Eastern Asia were you able to inspect?

All that I have said relates to India. My assignment took me to Malaysia and the Philippines, and our journey after the Conferences were over took us to China, Japan, and Korea, and Honolulu.

The work in Malaysia is most interesting and, as it seems to me, exceedingly promising. The industrial developments in the various parts of Malaysia are rapid and significant. It is one of the regions where they are in need of and seeking population. Many millions of China's enormous multitude will find a home somewhere in Malaysia. Our church is working on statesmanlike lines to meet and master the conditions there, some of them rapidly changing. We had a visit during the Conference from two Chinese gentlemen from out in Java, sent by their local Chamber of Commerce, who came asking us to send them two school teachers to establish Christian schools in their city. And they were most careful to tell us that they would themselves meet all the expenses, including salaries. All they wanted was the teachers.

It is not easy to restrain one's enthusiasm over our work in the Philippines. Possibly being under the Stars and Stripes again after many months had something to do with stirring our feelings.

What our government has done in the brief years of our occupancy is enough to make every American proud. The American schoolhouse is the new symbol

in the Island. There as at home America believes in popular education.

What the American churches have done is enough to set an American to singing doxologies and national airs. There is a careful territorial agreement between the churches so that the work does not overlap. There is a fine spirit also between them, resulting in admirable co-operation and consequent influence for Protestantism.

We held the Conference at Mexico in the Province of Pampanga, a beautiful session held in the converted theater presented to the Church by our splendid brethren, the Cunanan brothers, who entertained all the missionaries at their own table through the session. On Sunday the whole town celebrated the tenth anniversary of the coming of Protestantism to the town. The two most striking "floats" in the parade were a Bible chained and padlocked on one table and an open Bible radiant with light on another.

The Philippine Islands University will be built at once in Manila. The Christian churches should at once provide ample hostels to take care of their own young people and should unite to build in Manila a union Christian College powerful and commanding in its equipment and faculty and thoroughly Christian in its tone. No one denomination can do it in strength—such strength as to command the situation. Such an institution should be as good as the government's own in its collegiate work, plus the spirit and presence of Christ.

The work of the American churches in the Philippines has a significance and importance for the East quite beyond the size of that work itself, just as the work in Hawaii has. In these Islands the work of the American churches, under the American flag, is an exhibition to the Orient. Countries like China and Japan are both interested in seeing what we do under such conditions. There is a double necessity for doing it well.

In the Philippines, as in China, Korea, and Japan, it was more than a joy to meet that splendid layman from Brooklyn, Frank L. Brown, who was representing the International Sunday School Association and our own Board of Sunday Schools in services of the highest value. In all these countries the Sunday school is a genuinely live institution. In the Philippines the Rev. Harry Farmer will hereafter give half his time to Sunday school work, the Board of Foreign Missions and the Board of Sunday Schools dividing his salary between them.

Have your convictions deepened as to the quality of missionaries needed in our various fields?

How can one fail to have his convictions deepen on that point as he sees the difficulties on the field? Lord Salisbury wrote Lord Roberts when he wanted that great soldier to go to South Africa: "We are finding out that this war depends on the generals." This work calls for the best the Church has to offer. How many men on the field said to me, sometimes with tears, always with intensity: "Send us the best men you can get!" More than one with a noble record of devotion and achievement said: "Send better men than we are—the work calls for better men every year. It is one of the sure tests of our work that it always compels better work than ours to be done. We are not doing well unless those who come after us are compelled to do better. The machinery of missions calls for more competent engineers every year." So men on the field spoke over and over again. The whole matter on the human side of it hinges on the quality of the missionary. The selection and training of missionaries should everywhere be put upon the wisest and most adequate basis.

Will the mission field best profit by an increase in the number of missionaries with general qualifications, adaptable for any phase of the

work, or should we send an increasing number of men and women exceptionally qualified for particular duties?

Both. Just as at home there is always abundant room for men of general ability, provided it is of high order, a mission should always have men whom it can use in almost any place. Men are few and must do many things. A mission made up wholly of specialists would be badly handicapped. And a mission without specialists cannot do its work. Education particularly requires more and more that men shall be specially prepared for it. Government makes that necessary even if there were no other influences at work. But in other fields the same demand exists. The work of Brenton Badley for the Epworth League has already justified his appointment and will increasingly do so according to present outlook. The next special appointments I would make for India would be two specialists for Sunday school work, and one specialist to be educational secretary, to do for India what Dr. Gamewell is doing for China. We have two thirds of all the Sunday school enrollment of India. It is an immense field. Our educational institutions of all classes need correlating and unifying and standardizing and the touch of a master hand. The organization of our schools into a system, the treatment of our educational work as a whole, the adjustment of one part of it according to wise policy to the system as a whole, this should be done at once. An educational statesman would have an immense field in India and an almost unsurpassed opportunity to do a monumental work. He would find all ready to his hand a noble lot of schools, fine and strong, waiting only to be organized into such a system as would compel all India's admiration. And Methodism can do this kind of thing. Anything else is un-Methodistic.

Is Methodism going to make its largest contribution to the Christianization of Asia by seeking

on that continent to gather together an Asiatic "people called Methodists," or by an emphasis on universal values to work toward the establishment of national churches in India, China, etc.?

I can speak only of India, having seen so small a part of China and Japan. The denominational emphasis in India as in America must always be upon the denomination as a means to the establishment of the kingdom. Methodism has no mission anywhere simply to gather together a "people called Methodists." But her proper emphasis upon universal values is not made anywhere by striking her own note feebly, but by striking it harmoniously; harmoniously with the note of universal values and with all other churches playing the same tune. That is the general statement. That there must be a new co-operation on the field is a modern commonplace. That there is more of it already on the field than at home is doubtless true. But the hint of a national church in India compels me to say that I do not find evidence that the church in India is anywhere near ready to plan for such a thing. The conditions for a national church in India simply do not now exist and will not, I fear, for a long time yet.

You know the home church and you have now traveled widely among our Asiatic fields. Where, in your judgment, is the crux of the problem of Methodism to-day, in the matter of meeting its full responsibility to the non-Christian world?

There is rarely a complicated and vast enterprise like the missionary cause that depends or chiefly depends upon any one thing, however important. There are not many of these problems that can be solved by a single word, or situations that can be opened by a skeleton key. We could do our work much more easily if the system of the skeleton key could be applied. I have not found that it can. I would say that the crux of the problem is not our machinery, nor our cash box,

nor our missionaries, but the perfect adjustment and use of the total power of the church, under God's Spirit, to the total task of the church.

It goes without saying that among the very greatest needs are those for funds and reinforcements. But do you return with any new convictions about how these needs can be met from the home base?

I have been steadily studying the foreign field during the seven months since leaving home, and have not been studying the home base. I return, however, with a deepened sense of the value of the organized work of the Board of Foreign Missions as distinguished from all individual and independent operations. And in response to your question I can only give the general answer that the Board as the connecting agency between the field at home and the force on the field abroad should be strengthened in every way. It should have in its hand the appeal of the general cause and the charm of the special causes. The cheapest, best, most correlated and permanent missionary work I have seen is the work directed and supported by Boards like our own. Of course the state of the church at home determines the fate of the church abroad. The condition of the heart affects all the extremities. And I do not mean the simple willingness to give money. I mean particularly the ability to give life. For long, long yet the heart at home must be supplying blood to the far extremities.

